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SUGGESTIONS FOR LESSONS AIMING AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT AND IMAGINATION.

BY MISS M. E. PORTER.

No. I. THE SKY.

WHEN Miss C. Mason asked me to write a short series of papers for the *Parents' Review*, she drew my attention to a very suggestive passage in Canon Eyton's Sermons on the Ten Commandments. In his sermon on the Second Commandment he says of the imagination, "It needs restraint; it needs also cultivation. It can never be said too strongly that to use your imagination aright you must spiritualise it. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'—they and only they. You must keep its delicate fibre untarnished, otherwise you cannot see that *which is*, the real, the divine. There is nothing on which perhaps it is more necessary to insist than on this, especially with young people. Fancy is free—free as air. Who would check fancy as long as it runs to innocent dreams of fairies and elves, as long as it peoples the world with the bright innocent forms in which childhood delights? Who would weaken the most needed lesson which grows out of a right use of the imaginative faculty, viz., that all that we can see with our eyes is only the veil of a higher and more beautiful world beyond sight? Who that knows the real mind of little children is not sensible of the fact that there is often a deeper truth hidden in their day dreams than all our philosophies will ever arrive at? But that is true only during the period of the unself-conscious imagination. That stage passes away and then the imagination becomes self-conscious; instead of giants and fairies, self becomes the central figure, and then there are the pitfalls and the precipices all around—then the unheeding steps go

and gather poison as if it were honey, and chew the henbane as if it were fruit . . . The only way of keeping the imagination from poison is by presenting it with its true food. Give it real loveliness to dwell on and it will reject the sham, the pretentious, the unworthy. This is true as regards all studies and pursuits which train the imagination, and it is true also as regards the way in which everything is taught." After speaking of music Mr. Eyton goes on to remark, "In painting the same law holds good. The undisciplined imagination revels in flaming colours and coarse realism, it has little appreciation of what is really beautiful and suggestive; it cannot grasp the spirituality of a great painter because it dislikes some details of his pictures, the complexions of the female portraits or their attitudes, and through dwelling on these his pre-eminent spirituality remains a sealed book. Nothing is more depressing than to listen to the ordinary remarks of the average English woman in a picture gallery; nothing tells such dismal stories of the results of an education of pothooks and historical facts and latitudes and longitudes than their thin and commonplace comments. There has been in such cases no attempt at training the imagination to see and to construct the beautiful and the real; it has been left to take its chance, and yet how powerful an agent it is!"

I have quoted thus at length from Mr. Eyton's sermon because the following suggestions for lessons are a humble attempt to do something in the direction pointed out—the training of the imagination.

I have chosen the Sky as the first subject, and should call the attention of a child to the fact that when we are out of doors our eyes are drawn to the earth and the sky, and that one feeling we have about the sky is its spaciousness, which gives us a sense of freedom in the open air. This great space is full of air, an "ocean of air" it has been called, in which we live and move at the bottom where it floats over the earth. This would naturally lead to the advantage which birds and insects have over ourselves, in being able to move easily in the air, and the contrivances by which man gives himself the power of rising into the air, such as balloons and flying machines.

I should then call attention to movements of the air, how sometimes it moves so gently that it seems to kiss our

foreheads, while at other times it moves so quickly and causes great storms, getting the listeners to give me the effects of storms which they might have noticed or heard of. Then I should draw attention to the invisibility of the air which surrounds the earth like a veil, telling them that the misty appearance when we look at a distant object through much intervening space, is caused by the tiny particles of moisture held in the air, while the air itself remains invisible; in this way, though the sky is full of invisible air, the moisture in it causes clouds which can be seen and which give us a succession of beautiful forms and colours, presenting us with a series of pictures, except when the sky is covered with dense fog or a uniform rain cloud. A description of a beautiful sky effect would lead children to look out for such effects themselves, and they should note down the principal shades of colour they observe, while they might imitate the form of a cloud they specially admired with Chinese white on grey paper; in the case of warm clouds the white might be mixed with a yellow or orange tint, and the grey paper should be damped with water before the Chinese white is used. I will venture to give here a description of a sunrise seen last January. When I woke the sun had not risen, but the sky was full of warm, bright light, and on the right and left hand of the eastward sky were great masses of piled up grey cloud, with a space of sky of a bright orange colour between them. While I watched, the edges of those grey clouds turned a soft rose colour, the rising sun was shining through their thin edges, then again, a moment later, the sun rose into the space of clear sky, while the great masses of piled up cloud on either hand, looked like gates which had opened for the sun to rise between them; there was music too, to greet his coming, for a little bird who had also watched the day-spring, broke out into a clear bright song.

I should get children to notice that the forms of cloud alter at different times of the day, that as a *general* rule piled up clouds are seen about noon and later, while at sunrise and sunset we more often see long bars of cloud in horizontal lines sometimes crossing the face of the sun.

Probably, in speaking of the sky, the question will occur "Why is it blue in fine weather?" The answer is that space would tell as darkness, only that the tiny particles of moisture

catch the light and form a thin veil between us and the darkness of space. If you cover anything black with thin white muslin and look at it from a distance you will see that black seen through white gives a bluish shade. Once, on a sea-shore, I saw a little way off what appeared to be distinctly a blue shrub. On walking up to it I found it was a shrub with very dark twigs, and these twigs were encrusted with salt, which gave it the effect of a blue coloured shrub. You might point out that the pictures in the sky are especially beautiful; in showery weather, when there are masses of cloud rolling about the sky, taking all kinds of beautiful forms, and the lighting up of the cloud masses by the sunlight breaking through them brings out a great variety of beautiful tender colour in varying shades. You will give your children a source of life-long pleasure if you thus encourage them to make the open sky one of their picture books. It was my lot to live for some years in a very flat part of England, and when I returned from a holiday in Switzerland and missed the glorious mountains, I found much consolation in watching the shifting panorama of the sky.

You might point out to the children that if they watched a small white cloud, high up in the sky, on a warm day, they would sometimes see it vanish, in which case the water vapour had become probably thinner through the increasing warmth of the atmosphere, till it became invisible, while a cold current of air, passing through a cloud, will condense the particles of vapour, and make them fall as drops of rain, and that dew is probably formed by the warm moist air floating above the ground, which, touching something colder than itself, like grass, is deposited on the blades of grass as dewdrops.

You might point out to them that in the Book of Genesis we are told that God separated the waters on the earth from the waters above the firmament, and that the waters of the sky are thus stored in the clouds before they descend as rain or snow to fill our rivers and fertilize the earth.

I should then remind the children that we often speak of real things or facts, and that there are two different classes of real things; the things which are noticed by our senses, we hear or see them, and that there are other things, also real things, which we cannot touch or see with our bodily

eyes. They will know there is such a thing as a mother's love; they can see the kind actions which spring from it, but the love itself is unseen, but real, and I should tell them that we often want to get a clear idea of invisible truths, and that one way is by looking at the unseen facts, through the things we *can* see. The text might be quoted from the Prophet Malachi, "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings."

First we think of sunrise: how it scatters the darkness; then we think of that great event that came at a later time, the birth of Jesus Christ, which brought so much hope and joy to those who longed to be delivered from the slavery of sin. Thus the prophet taught the people to look for a future deliverer, and the words of the aged Simeon might be quoted, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Jewish ceremonies are spoken of as "the figures of the true."

Then I should put it before them that the sky had been talked of, its spaciousness, the movements of the winds in its great spaces, the vapours which take glorious forms and colours as they float through the air, suggesting what thoughts this great changing scene might bring to our minds, and I should tell them that to many people, both now and in the olden times, it suggested the thought of God, of His presence that fills heaven and earth, of His lovingkindness to both the evil and the good, referring to such passages as that in Jeremiah, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord." Jer. xxiii. 24. Then we have the words in the Book of Psalms, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence. . . . If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Here I may note that the expression "wings of the morning" may refer, it has been suggested, to the light clouds, which dwellers near the great sea, viz., the Mediterranean, would see floating over it in the early morning.

It would be easy to get the children to see that we could not get out of the region of the air, that wherever we went we

should breathe it, that if we rose in it the air would carry and support us, and that it thus sets before us, in a wonderful manner, the presence of God filling earth and heaven. Then, in reference to the mysterious movements of the air, the winds, the wonderful interview of Jesus Christ with Nicodemus, who came to Him by night, would throw light on that deep truth the power of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men. Christ said if a man would enter His kingdom, become His follower, he must undergo a great change—must be born again. But Nicodemus could not understand this. Try to make the quiet scene *real* through the children's natural gift of imagination. Probably they were sitting near an open door or window-opening, perhaps the wind, that so often rises in the evening coolness, blew softly, stirring the branches of the trees outside, at any rate we know that Christ spoke of the wind, used it as an illustration of the unseen power of God's Holy Spirit; a power the effects of which can be seen while itself remains invisible. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the spirit."

Then, again, the beauty of the sky suggests the idea that God loves beauty of form and colour, and presents it thus to us because He would fain have us love it too, as Mrs. Browning says:—

"This poet God is good and glad."

Then you might remind them of a still higher beauty, spiritual beauty, beauty of character, and that this higher endowment in its highest form is holiness without which no man can see God, the wedding garment without which we cannot sit down at heavenly feasts, the gift we pray for when we say "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." And if we train ourselves, in these earthly days, to love beauty in all its higher forms, we are fitting ourselves for the more glorious visions of the future life: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" is among those

"Promised things which shall be given,
And sung over up in heaven."

Then lastly, the sweet influences of the sky upon the earth, the rain, the dew, the cold and heat, would all suggest the

lovingkindness of God, and the children would easily see how natural it is to use these gifts of God as figures by which we speak of His unseen gifts to heart and soul, as when we seek the dew of His blessing. Then again, the Fatherly character of these natural gifts bestowed on the evil and the good, the just and the unjust, should develope in us the brotherliness to all men, irrespective of their conduct to us, which happily in our day is bringing forth such blessed fruit in deeds of mercy.

Those of us who have been teachers for many years, are very thankful to see the increased interest shown by parents in the religious instruction of their children, and the recognition that the foundations of such instruction must be the intelligent study of the Word of God. The other day, as I stood by Mr. Watts' picture of the prophet Jonah, in the Royal Academy, two ladies stood beside me, one looked at her catalogue and exclaimed, "Jonah! but what was he in such a frenzy about?" The other replied, she could not help her as she knew very little about Scripture.

CHATS WITH NURSE.

BY TWO MOTHERS.

V. SYMPTOMS (*continued*).

(*Extract of letter from Mrs. Ernest to Janet*).

As I cannot return home this week, I will write down a few suggestions about the beginning of illnesses, which you can study when you have a quiet evening, and, if you talk them over with Jane, I think you will always be able to remember them in time of need.

Measles.—I will first take measles. These lie latent in the system sometimes as long as twenty-one days, although the usual period is fourteen days, so that it is not safe to consider the house free from infection for twenty-one days after the last child is better. The most infectious time, strange to say, is before the fever appears. In this it is peculiar, and certainly trying, and it is almost in vain to hope that it will not go through the nursery, amongst those who have never had it. The earliest symptoms are those of an influenza cold, a real streaming cold, and the eyes are watery and red. The child is fretful, feverish, and very thirsty, and often complains of pains in the limbs. The spots are typical, and may be termed crescent-shaped, running one into the other. When pressed with the finger there is a curious raised feeling. The peeling of the body afterwards is of a dusty nature, unlike the pieces that come off in scarlet fever, and great care is needed during convalescence, however slight the attack may have been.

You remember that last week I was anxious about Nora, and you thought she was going to have measles, but, as she had no sign of cold except a sore throat, I knew it could not be so. I was more afraid of scarlet fever, as we had had a case near us.

Scarlet Fever.—The time of incubation is short, generally five days, seven at most. The tongue is typical from the thick coating, through which rise red dots, reminding one of the seeds of the strawberry. "Strawberry tongue" is quite a recognised term of medicine. The rash first appears at the root of neck and upper part of the chest. It consists of a number of fine scarlet points, and the skin looks sometimes